

From: Brian Ishida [mailto:ucspindoc-dive@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2008 12:12 AM
To: edlunds123@comcast.net; MLPACComments
Cc: Bill Bernard; NorCalSkinDivers@yahoogroups.com
Subject: Keep Salt Point State Park Waters Open to Recreational Fishing!

To whom it concerns:

On behalf of the Northern California Skindivers we oppose Salt Point State Park made into a no-take reserve. Not only will this impact the 40 club members who actively dive the areas spanning Timber Cove to Sea Ranch but it will impact by 1-2 magnitudes the number of divers who dive this area recreationally for abalone, fish, urchin, and scallops.

Salt Point State Park's Gerstle Cove allows us safe, convenient, and economical access to an important sector of the coast. No other access point, not Timber Cove, Ft. Ross, nor Ocean Cove, has a paved road that puts us within 50 yards of the ocean to launch kayaks. Not all of us have trucks, or are willing or confident to drive our passenger cars down tortuous gravel roads.

And, there are our aging divers. They are tough old salts who continue to enjoy the ocean dives. But now in their sixth and seventh decade of life they have long passed their prime diving years and need much more encouragement and allowances. Gerstle Cove is it for them: easy drive down, short distance to the shore, easy walk up, showers, changing and rest rooms, and a fish cleaning station.

For the rest of us, the Fisk Mill region includes one of the best areas. As it does not afford kayak access, it like many other rugged "goat" trails is self-limiting to diver impact. Few are willing to take a half-mile hike down and then back with load of abalone and fish. But for those that do that walk through the woods is enjoyed as much as the dive.

Shore fishermen, spearfishers, abalone divers and pickers are a major user faction of Salt Point State Park. Closing the park to fishing will be a major disappointment that will also result in revenue losses from day-use and camping fees, and to businesses that contribute to our perseverance of ocean outings.

To render Salt Point State Park a game reserve will essentially make it a RESERVED AREA for the look, no-take divers who are not as numerous as our user group who will be disproportionately impacted. Build it and they will come? No, not here. They would rather go south to Monterey and Carmel where the ocean is warmer, clearer, more easily accessible. We don't see them in numbers now and don't expect them in the future - reserve or not.

Fishing is already strictly regulated. The science shows that the recreational fishers are not the cause of the fisheries decline. This group should not be scorned but welcomed. They know the ocean. They have a vested interest. They are the conservators who will protect, educate and sustain the life of the ocean for our future generations. Closing Salt Point State Park will not serve this interest.

Sincerely,
Brian Ishida
President, Northern California Skindivers